



Elegant gaming casino shows painting affixed to ceiling surrounded by lavish gilding, plaques and

other embellishments. Rods suspended from ceiling once supported drill motors when club was factory.

## Elegant Was the Club

# Grand Was the Word For Glendale Terminal

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By JOHN MILLRANY  
News-Press Staff Writer

Grand was the word for the original West Coast capital of aviation—the Grand Central Airport in Glendale.

Grand because another word, elegant, best describes the aviators' club which did so much to enhance the exciting world of aviation of the '20s.

That club was first known as Airport Gardens, later the Aviators Country Club.

Both the airport and the club lived colorful, though relatively brief lives.

Evolution of the airplane was a principal cause in the demise of Grand Central Airport. Modest in size—while large enough to handle the small biplanes known as Jennies in the "bush pilots" era of the late '20s and early '30s — GCA ultimately shrank into oblivion with the coming of the larger, more utilitarian Lockheed and Los Angeles International airports.

### First Runway

Glendale City Council, at the behest of the Chamber of Commerce, purchased the land and paved the first runway in 1922. The city's tenure was short, for a syndicate consisting of Dr. T. C. Young, A. L. Eastman, W. E. Hewitt, Peter L. Ferry and Roy L. Kent took it over.

Here it was the Kinner Motor Co. started manufacturing its famous aircraft motor.

In 1929, Curtiss-Wright acquired the fully developed airport and facilities, for about \$2 million, coinciding with the construction of the Airport Gardens.

In its prime, around 1930, Airport Gardens was timeless. It combined the most sumptuous features of a Monte Carlo casino, the cordiality of a Century City hotel and amusement of a Las Vegas resort—all catered to pilots and their friends, many of them movie stars.

In fact, the Gardens' original purpose was to serve as a fly-

in motel, putting it way ahead of its time.

But hardly a modest motel at that, considering one could occupy a private room and bath, complete with locker, pool, dining, recreation and gaming privileges.

It had indeed the aura of a millionaires' club.

History is the only tenant of the legendary aviators' club, now a pile of rubble after wreckers devoted less than a month to tear down what must have taken an extravagance of time to build.

Mediterranean in design and built with Class A materials and purpose, the building featured more than 20 private, spacious rooms on three levels and in two major wings—plus a great dining hall and gaming casino equipped with a sunken dance floor on springs.

The casino housed a magnificent painting on the ceiling, removed only last Sunday (News-Press, Aug. 16 edition) and other lavish adornments.

Its replacement, a light manufacturing commercial concern, can only be pedestrian in comparison. But Glendale's grand old flying days are over.

Today, the 175-acre airport

area is owned by Grand Central Industrial Centre, which took over after obsolescence and produced a \$50 million-plus light industry park, one of the finest of its kind, under direction of Maj. C. C. Moseley, the former vice president of Grand Central Airport.

With the passing of the Airport Gardens, the only landmarks linking Glendale with its flying past are the old airport terminal building and the recently deactivated aviators' beacon atop Cod Point in nearby Griffith Park.

### 1940 Factory

The gardens has a checkered history, none too fully documented. Rumors persist regarding its alleged illicit attractions, including bootlegged liquor, high-rolling gaming and certain other axiomatic pastimes.

Wreckers tell of a tunnel leading from the basement to an escape hatch in the L.A. River, presumably used to flee John Law after he was spotted from the three-story tower, bent on making a raid.

As for the gaming casino, workers exposed its false north wall, alluding to where the management stashed the card ta-

bles, craps shoots and roulette wheels.

But such enterprises were not the only function of the gardens. It served as a legitimate motel for a time and later became an officers' pilot training barracks-club during World War II.

Several firms occupied the club after it was no longer reserved for the early Prop Set. While a factory during the '40s, various forms of manufacturing took place there.

As an ironic insult to the Reubens-like ladies painted on the casino ceiling, brackets and wires to support drill motors were hung from a Renaissance sky in the slightly rotunda-like ceiling.

Librascope's art and technical writing departments once occupied the Gardens, which provided private rooms for the writers and an inspirational setting for illustrators working in the casino.

Finally, the Gardens fell vacant, and today was its last official day to be wrecked.

Thus the edifice turns to rubble and the old airport's most enduring hangar, the element of history, will officially house the Airport Gardens' memories.